

History uncovered at Redstone Arsenal cemeteries



Photo by John Rankin

MYSTERY PLOT— The buried headstone of Jane S. Davies, located in the Boeing area Lacy Cemetery, is an enigma.

Family gravesites filled with stories

By **KELLEY LANE**

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Often when a community and its inhabitants have died, the stories of their lives go with them. They leave behind the carefully placed monuments of cemeteries as proof of their existence. These carved stone spires say little — names, dates and the occasional inscription. They only hint at the lives they represent. Redstone is full of such hints at the past.

Long before the Army took up residence, the area that would become Redstone Arsenal was made up of small communities of various sizes and origins. People were born here. They lived their lives here. They died here. Over the years, one or two graves became small family and community cemeteries. The oldest recorded date goes back to 1820. There are about 48 of these cemeteries scattered across Redstone. While the number may raise the eyebrows, volunteer John Rankin says that is not an unusual amount, given the size of the Arsenal.

"We have over 50 square miles of Arsenal property and that's less than one cemetery per square mile," Rankin said. "If you look at a plot of Madison County, that's not unusual to have at least one cemetery per square mile. That's not an unusual density at all. It's about average."

The Environmental Office is responsible for the welfare of these graveyards. Besides ensuring that the grounds are maintained, the staff tries to research the history behind the families and individuals interred here. Public records are perused to find clues to the bigger stories behind the two or three lines etched in stone. When a living descendant is available, they conduct interviews to fill in the gaps in information. The long-term goal is to put together a report or resource for information about the cemeteries and their residents, but completion of such a goal is not expected for another two years or so, because of the amount of work that must go into every entry. The research is still an ongoing process.

The people buried on Redstone may be quiet, but they are not silent. Each tells a story. Some are inspirational tales of free black farmers who raised their families in prosperity alongside white plantations. Others speak of Revolutionary War soldiers, who settled here to enjoy the freedom they had fought so hard for. The grave of the most recent interment is that of Rev. J.E. Jones, buried in 1935. His is the story of a man so well loved by his

community that the weight of all those attending his funeral collapsed the church floor, an account relayed to Beverly Curry through an interview with a relative of Jones still living in Madison County. His wife was a relative of Jones and attended the funeral.

"His wife was a small child at the time," Curry said. "She remembers being handed out the window."

Some are strange and almost funny. The marker on the grave of Mary Patton reads that she was born in 1856. It then says that she died in 1840, 16 years before she was born. It appears to be a mistake made by whoever made the tombstone. Rankin has a theory as to why the mistake was made and then left.

"The old engravers weren't always much above illiterate," he said. "It was hard work and you may not have always been paying attention if the horse flies and mosquitoes were biting you. If that's the last thing you put on the stone, you're not about to redo it."

Other graves only hint at mysteries. Little Mary Lou Jones lived a short time in 1888 before her death. The marker of the infant proclaims her parent's surname as Proctor. The difference in last names is a source of puzzlement for those attempting to piece together a history of Redstone's burial grounds. Missing and destroyed records from the time period make it a difficult question to answer.

Also puzzling to researchers is the grave of Jane S. Davies. Rankin literally stumbled upon the mystery while attempting to take a picture of another grave. He thought the small bit of tombstone sticking out of the ground was a broken fragment of another marker, so he attempted to free it so that it could be repaired. The more soil he cleared away, the larger the fragment became until he realized that it was in fact an entire marker underground. While he could read the name and inscription after uncovering so much of the marker, little else is known about its owner. Flooding and fallen trees usually account for buried stones, but in this case it is unlikely. Surrounding and older graves are at normal ground level and the cemetery is on a hill. Research and records have not been able to uncover the truth about Davies and her mysterious marker.

"It's the most mysterious puzzle, to me, of anything I've found on this base," Rankin said. "It just makes no sense. It was not buried by floods. It was not buried by any act of nature. It was deliberately buried, completely vertical. It's not broken, not cracked, not weathered. It's perfectly preserved in the ground."

See **Cemetery** on page 7

General Byrnes sets sights on TRADOC's future

Training and Doctrine Command on track for maintaining standards

By SFC REGINALD P. ROGERS
Army News Service

FORT MONROE, Va. — Eight months into his tenure as the Training and Doctrine Command commanding general, Gen. Kevin Byrnes said he has seen tremendous changes within the Army and his command.

Byrnes took the TRADOC leadership reins Nov. 7, 2002.

The first thing Byrnes said he wanted the TRADOC community to know, during a recent interview, is the command is focused on the Army's future fighting force.

"I would tell them that we're on track," he said. "We're doing what the Army and the nation needs of us. What we're doing is absolutely critical to the Army and the nation. I think if you look at our most recent success in Operation Enduring Freedom, I think that the value of training — training to standard and training under tough conditions — has proven itself to be the difference between the best Army in the world and others."

Byrnes attributed much of the Army's success to leader development and noted that it will continue to play a crucial part in the Army's success in the future.

"We grow leaders everyday in the Officer Education System and Noncommissioned Officer Education System," he said.

He said his top priorities as TRADOC commander are leader development and ensuring that all soldiers are properly trained.

"Those embedded reporters — we've known it for a while — but the embedded reporters showed the American people what we've been talking about. We've achieved a level of respect and confidence that no Army has in the past."

He vowed that the Army would maintain the standards and confidence the American public expects it to have in the Army of the future.

Byrnes said TRADOC's mission remains largely unchanged from when Gen. William Depuy first laid it out 30 years ago — to train the Army for war, develop leaders, establish standards, build the Army of the future and recruit the force.

He said his priorities operate within that mission framework. Those priorities are:

- **Support Operation Iraqi Freedom** and the ongoing Global War on Terrorism — Byrnes said the command would continue to support the current operations with whatever resources are necessary.

- **Training and leader development** to standard — "I will ensure that we have the right resources in the way of quality instructors and drill sergeants and the dollar resources so we can accomplish our mission as the Army expects us to," Byrnes said. "Beyond that, everything else is secondary."

- **Transformation** — "We're going to transform this Army into an Objective Force," Byrnes said. "We're going to do it with first units being fielded this decade; we're going to get that right. There has been a lot of hard work during the last three years designing the organization. We've also taken a hard look at the



Photo by Joe Burtas/ARNEWS

TAKING COMMAND— Gen. John Abrams, retiring Training and Doctrine Command commander, prepares to pass the TRADOC flag to Army chief of staff Gen. Eric Shinseki as incoming commander Gen. Kevin Byrnes looks on. Abrams handed the reins of TRADOC leadership to Byrnes Nov. 7 at Fort Monroe, Va.

training programs, at the tactics, techniques and procedures, and at types of equipment and technology capabilities we want to put in the hands of our soldiers. But that work will continue as we move into the future."

Transforming the Army includes a number of major programs that must be in operation to ensure Transformation, he said.

"The first is a rigorous experimentation program that allows us to take the good

ideas and the first pieces of the future combat systems, being developed, put them in the hands of our soldiers and let them push (the equipment) to failure," Byrnes said. "(By doing this they can) tell us what works, what doesn't work and let us redesign it, then put it back out. The continuous spiral of the experimentation will get us better."

"So that when we develop the first force, (it has) been 'soldier-certified' so we have what we believe is the right soldier, the right organization, the right training, the right leader development and the right equipment in the hands of the world's best soldier."

He said there's also an element under Transformation that tells us we will never fight another war alone again. That element is the process of combining all branches of the U.S. armed forces, along with other coalition forces to face a common enemy. That element, referred to as jointness, is another of Byrnes' priorities.

- **Joint relationships** — "We've got to include more of a joint force in everything we do," he said. "We have to become fully integrated into joint warfighting. Our exercises have to be done in a joint context. Our doctrines have to be developed, keeping in mind that we're going to fight as a member of a joint team. We should have in mind that we're developing the force to contribute to the joint force commander."

See Future on page 9

Forty-eight cemeteries include one for pets

Cemetery

continued from page 6

One cemetery at Redstone is still in use. It is the pet cemetery. There people pay loving tribute to the animals that were a part of their lives. The grave markers range in age and style. Some are simple wooden plaques. Others are carved stones bearing names, dates and occasionally the story of an animal's life. Phyllis Montgomery comes as often as she can to visit the grave of her dog, Schatzi, who died at age 17 in 1999, while Montgomery and her husband were living at Redstone.

"Schatzi was a Lhasa Poo Tzu," Montgomery said. "When you lose a pet, it's nice to have a place that you know is going to be here."

Curry hopes to begin researching the pet cemetery this fall. "Looking at all of the markers, there must be some good stories here," Curry said. She hopes to find information about the owners of the animals and the animals themselves, possibly with pictures, to include them in the historical compilation.

The presence of these former residents of Redstone speaks to the richness of history in the Redstone and Huntsville community. They are silent reminders of the roots of this community. Uncovering the history of these people and pets is a great



Photo by Kelley Lane

PET CEMETERY— Beverly Curry listens as Phyllis Montgomery tells the story of Schatzi, her beloved dog, buried in Redstone's pet cemetery.

commitment, and one the Environmental Office takes seriously. If you are the descendant of or have information about a person or a pet interred on the Arsenal, call Curry at 955-6971 or e-mail her at beverly.curry@redstone.army.mil.